

How Olympic gold medalist BMX rider Matthias Dandois kept his word

One of the most endearing BMX freestyle riders on the planet is Matthias Dandois. Whether racing at the top level as a BMX flatland athlete, filming video portions, or even off the bike as a podcast presenter and part-time model, the 33-year-old Frenchman is all about pure fun. Olympic fans can buy [Olympic Cycling BMX Freestyle Tickets](#) from our website.

Dandois, a multiple World Champion and the victor of some of the biggest flatland competitions the sport has to offer, stands out as one of the top ambassadors for his sport because of his drive to advance his riding skills, be inventive, and win competitions.



His initial passion was football.

Like many others who compete professionally in flatland or other freestyle disciplines, Dandois' path to BMX greatness began by watching someone ride a BMX.

"I watched a man performing a BMX flatland demo on the C'est Mon Choix chat show in France. Incredibly cool."

Dandois alternated between playing handball and football for his extracurricular and varsity athletic attempts until discovering BMX. South of central Paris, in the town of Épinay-sur-Orge, is where Dandois was raised.

"I enjoyed playing football, and every time I did, I would see a scout watching me from the stands while I went through trials at Paris Saint-Germain. The issue? I failed. I particularly recall blowing a penalty in a crucial tournament game. My career was over as a result."

After seeing that performer on the TV show, everything for Dandois changed. The man's ability to perform feats on a bike with such freedom and agility captured his attention. Soon after, he began nagging his parents for a BMX so he could attempt to duplicate those tricks. His classmates were pleading with their parents to buy them BMXs as well.

We saw that these individuals appeared to be having a lot more fun than us when playing football as we watched events like the X Games and people having fun on TV series like Jackass. So my folks gave me a bike for Christmas after I learned about flatland, and off we went. Olympic fans can buy [Olympic Games Tickets](#) from our website.



His playground was a parking lot.

There was nowhere truly that Dandois and his friends could ride at the time. Since there was no local skatepark, they established a home in the tennis club's parking lot, where they would congregate and try to accomplish the freestyle tricks and flatland movements they had seen on television and in films. Dandois soon realized that he had some talent.

"I discovered that I was more talented than the rest when doing stunts for the first time in my life."

If I didn't have class, I would bike for up to 10 hours a day from the age of 13 to 16. People questioned my dad about why I spent so much time in the parking lot because it appeared odd to them.

BMX was turning into "an obsession." Dandois was also spending time honing his skills and learning from a professional BMX rider who frequented a nearby town during this period.

"There were only two flatland clubs in France at the time, so it was an absurd coincidence. There is one close to my house in Sainte-Geneviève-des-Bois. He taught me the fundamentals because, back then, there weren't many YouTube tutorials and it was challenging to create or learn new things.

Dandois found competitive success quickly; at age 15, he took first place in domestic competition. My fascination with flatland increased significantly after then.



"It was absurd. So far, I had not been successful. I told myself that I wanted to feel that way for the rest of my life since being at the platform was such a wonderful experience."

When I was 16, my parents constructed a flatland training area in our garden because they were getting worried about how much time I was spending outside. To ride at night, I even set up a light. On occasion, my mother came

outside to compel me to go to bed. But I am very grateful to her and my father for letting me pursue my interests at that young age."

Why having a mentor is important

Alex Jumelin, a fellow Frenchman, played a significant role in Dandois' development during his adolescent years. Jumelin, who is a world-class flatland athlete in his own right, mentored Dandois in several ways. This included accompanying Dandois to competitions in France and other countries as a member of the Stereo Panda flatland squad.

"Alex was 25 when we first met, whereas I was barely a youngster. Knowing he was by my side gave my parents a great deal of comfort. I'm not sure what I would have done if it weren't for him and the other Stereo Panda employees. Especially from a logistical standpoint... I allowed the movement to carry me along with them."

A first professional victory

Dandois was starting to gain notoriety in the flatland sector and making a name for himself by triumphing in international competitions. He was swiftly transitioning from an amateur to a pro. At Voodoo Jam in New Orleans in 2007, Dandois, who is now 17 years old, experienced his first significant victory. He was unquestionably an outsider.

"I initially participated in Voodoo Jam in 2007, which was a stage on the BMX Flatland World Circuit at the time. I had traveled from Epinay-sur-Orge, and now I was here with all the pros I had previously seen in magazines and films, which made me feel strange. And I triumphed, too!"

Dandois quickly traveled back to France after his first professional triumph to check on his academic progress and to prepare for the Baccalauréat tests, which are the French equivalent of the SATs.



"I board a plane and land in France on the Sunday after the contest. On Monday when I arrive, my father brings me right away to my school to view the Baccalauréat results. I was promised by his parents that if I succeeded, I could follow a riding career. I succeeded.

Dandois understood he had to leave his home at this time to continue his training and achieve his dream of being a professional flatland rider. He was fortunate to move in with Raphael Chiquet, another flatland athlete when Paris beckoned. Money was scarce, but life was generally nice. without any sponsors. Dandois was about to give up on his ambition until the stars started to come together for him.

"I was beginning to consider enrolling in English-speaking universities in the hopes of pursuing a career as a translator until I encountered Red Bull France, which I believe was fate. It resolved all of my issues. As a sponsored athlete, I was able to finance my travel expenses.

Moving up and forward

As soon as he signed with Red Bull, other sponsors, professional victories, and his first title as World Champion all followed. In 2008, he had already won the BMX Flatland World Circuit. The awards kept coming in after that, and Dandois was able to use them to fund his creative ideas for video productions with the support of his sponsors.

"Since I didn't feel as strong as the others and was probably a little naive, I didn't feel any pressure. I came with a fresh, fluid look. My bicycle's brakes had been removed. I stood out from the rest visually since I am tall."

An artistic spirit

Dandois's enthusiasm for flatland was diminishing by 2013. He acknowledges skipping workouts and going out too much. He considers giving up because injuries happen frequently and flatland has become more of a work than a hobby. But he discovered a way to rekindle his enthusiasm, take up BMX street riding, and explore his other interests besides riding bikes, such as photography.

"I felt much better after leaving the flatland's little bubble. It was essential for me to maintain my motivation. I find that I am more inventive with my bike the more things I do aside from BMX. A trip or a meeting may be all that is necessary. The goal is to view things from fresh angles."

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